

3.5 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the location of Solid Waste Disposal facilities:

Would the Minister inform Members whether all decisions on the location of the Composting Facility, the Re-use and Recycling Centre and the Energy from Waste Plant will be put on hold while the scrutiny review by the Environment Panel is taking place? And would the Minister give details of the type of enclosed composting facility that is being considered irrespective of where it may be sited?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye of St. Helier (Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

The location of the Composting Facility, the Re-use and Recycling Centre, and the New Energy from Waste plant are not subject to the current terms of reference issued by the Environment Scrutiny Panel. Consequently, those processes will not be put on hold. Indeed, the site location for the New Energy from Waste Plant is a matter for the Assembly to consider, and I can confirm that a report and proposition will be lodged shortly outlining the preferred site for the Energy from Waste facility. The final decision, however, whether that proposition is scrutinised or not, will be a matter for the Minister for Planning and Environment to consider. In respect of the enclosed facility, the type of facility for composting is still to be determined. The Department has received expressions of interest following an advertisement placed in the official journal of the European Community, and an evaluation of the submissions is currently being undertaken.

3.5.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am surprised it is not going to be put on hold while it is scrutinised. But my question then is, given what the Minister for Health - Senator Syvret - said the decision on siting the Composing Facility was taken to the Council of Ministers and it is minuted that it was on a casting vote that the decision was put it at La Collette. In view of the minutes of 9th March as well, Sir, could I ask the Minister for Transport, given that now the Council... can I quote their minute: "The Council accept that in the interest of openness and transparency it would disclose the way in which Ministers voted on particular issues." Would the Minister inform the House how he voted on the location of those facilities at La Collette? And I know I should not really give notice, but just to be helpful, when it is Chief Minister's question time I will be asking for all the names who were there and which way they all voted.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

In respect of my voting on that particular issue, I supported my Department's recommendation which was for location of composting facilities at Warwick Farm, and clearly I have since received a counter-recommendation from the Council of Ministers.

3.5.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can the Minister explain how his recent statement ties-in with the statement just made by Senator Syvret, the Minister for Health?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Yes, very easily. The Council of Ministers does not make decisions. Ministers do.

3.5.3 Deputy R.C. Duhamel of St. Saviour:

Can the Minister advise the House as to when the recording of this particular decision will be recorded on the website?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

It will be recorded on the website when final clearance of a ministerial decision is put through the Refuse Department. I cannot give a specific date.

3.5.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Given the increasing enthusiasm for recycling - even from distant places like St. John - would the Minister identify whether his thinking has changed and whether all the plans for a large incinerator and so on are now being revised within his department? Is he prepared to follow the public enthusiasm for recycling?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Yes, I am very delighted to see the public enthusiasm for recycling, and very pleased to see how already St. John's Parish has responded to public demands and are changing their collections. However, the thinking has not essentially changed. The waste strategy, as approved by the Assembly last year, is now in place and will be continued with, and while there are enormous recycling aspirations I again remind Members that aspirations are different from the practical reality of what can be achieved. My aspirations are as high as anybody else's but I believe it is only right and proper to set reasonably achievable targets.

3.5.5 Senator L. Norman:

I believe the Minister said that the States would be given the opportunity of deciding on the location of the Energy from Waste Plant, for which we are grateful. Would he also give an assurance that he will allow the States to make the decision on the siting of the new Composting Facility also, Sir?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I am afraid that is not a matter for the States. The Composting Facility was approved under the waste strategy, so the States has already supported that. And the location clearly, is finally a matter for the Minister for Planning and Environment. In respect of the other elements, yes, the location of the Energy from Waste Plant will be a matter for the Assembly and, incidentally, so will the final tendering approval of the plant itself.

3.5.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier:

Would the Minister now clearly stand up and acknowledge that his officers and he preferred the option as recommended by the Department for Warwick Farm for the composting site; and that he was persuaded by the Council of Ministers to take the decision himself, against his own thoughts and against those of his officers, to locate the composting site at La Collette? Also, is it not his decision, and his decision alone, not to allow this matter to go before Scrutiny to allow his decision, which has been influenced by the Council of Ministers, to be influenced by evidence?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The Deputy is quite right. It is my decision.

3.5.7 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister confirm that relying on the planning process to provide consultation in respect of the La Collette composting site is inadequate and that it would have been at least courteous of the Minister and his department to have consulted the elected members of the Parish concerned? Would he further confirm that the planning process will not allow for the evaluation of alternative sites?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

It is true that the planning process will not allow for evaluation of alternative sites but those evaluations have already been carried out. The reality of the matter is that the decision between Warwick Farm and La Collette was an extremely finely balanced one when assessed on entirely objective matters. The reason for the Council of Ministers preferred recommendation, albeit on a split vote, was that the siting of the composting facilities at La Collette offers the swiftest possible solution to solving the problem. That is a political decision and a political decision that I respect because the residents of Havre des Pas want the issue with the smell emanating from the composting plant resolved as swiftly as possible, and I intend to deal with the matter as swiftly as possible.

3.5.8 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister state whether the bids in response to the tender process were for the open shed-type design of composting or for the much more advanced and cleaner closed vessel composting?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The submissions that have been received - approximately 15 - relate to a number of enclosed composting facility designs. These range from fairly simple structures which have an aerated floor, concrete walls and a light plastic roof, to more robust structures culminating in very large and highly sophisticated sheds with controls of temperature, biofilters, et cetera. We will be looking at all the range of options and I can assure the Assembly we are likely to choose a Jersey-type solution.

3.5.9 Senator J.L. Perchard:

I sympathise with the Minister for Transport and Technical Services as this must have been an extremely difficult decision to make. Could the Minister tell us how the Council of Ministers made the decision for location of the composting site between a very unsatisfactory site and an unsatisfactory site?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I think the key element in the Council of Ministers thinking boiled down to how quickly can we resolve the problem?

3.5.10 Senator L. Norman:

Would the Minister confirm that I correctly understand what he has said? That although he believes that the most appropriate site for the new Composting Facility is Warwick Farm he will, in fact, be submitting a planning application to have it sited at La Collette?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Decisions quite often are finely balanced and this is an example of such a decision-making process. The 2 sites had merits and demerits. The facts of the situation are

that we should realise that a recent decision by the Planning Applications Sub-Committee with respect to an oyster farm located on a countryside green zone site has given a fairly clear indication of the current policy being adopted by the Environment and Planning Department. Consequently, Warwick Farm, it has to be said, is a similar site therefore it would be expected that there would be potentially considerable opposition, and given the recently indicated policy decisions of the Planning Sub-Committee that site may well have not been approved. That, of course, would have contributed substantial delay to any resolution of the Composting Facility problem at La Collette. Therefore there is some sense with taking a political decision and when the 2 sites were as finely balanced as they were there seems to be no real problem in realising that La Collette suddenly offered a better solution.

3.5.11 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Does the Minister intend to bring back to this House, for a final decision to be taken by this House, the question of what type of facility and technology are to be undertaking the composting role either at La Collette or anywhere else; or will it be a ministerial decision of his own or endorsed by the Council of Ministers?

Deputy G.W.J. De Faye:

That will clearly ultimately be a ministerial decision, but I am happy to take on board advice from Scrutiny should they wish to offer their views. And I will certainly consider placing the matter before the Council of Ministers.

3.5.12 Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Clement:

Could the Minister tell the Chamber what the time differentials are for the preparedness of both these sites?

Deputy G.W.J. De Faye:

The time differentials are substantial. We very much hope that a completion date for the enclosed composting plant may be achieved in late 2007, assuming there are no intervening delays or interruptions to the planning and tendering process. The Energy and Waste Plant, of course, is a year or 2 further down the line.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Sorry, when I asked for the differentials between the 2 sites, I meant between La Collette and the Warwick Farm site.

Deputy G.W.J. De Faye:

The timing differential boils down to would Warwick Farm ultimately get approval from the Environment and Planning Minister? And if it was turned down then the differential would be the length of the planning application process and its consideration. That is essentially the difference in timing.